

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDIP
SUBJ: VISIT OF INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE INDIAN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER VISITED BURMA AUGUST 16-19. DURING HIS STAY, WHICH WAS DESCRIBED AS A GOODWILL/ORIENTATION TRIP, THE MINISTER MET WITH TOP-LEVEL GUB OFFICIALS INCLUDING PRESIDENT NE WIN AND PRIME MINISTER MAUNG MAUNG KHA. THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER ISSUED A DEPARTURE STATEMENT SAYING HE HAD ENJOYED CORDIAL TALKS WITH GUB LEADERS ON INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND BILATERAL MATTERS. THIS WAS THE THIRD OFFICIAL VISIT TO BURMA IN LESS THAN A MONTH (OTHERS WERE BY THE PRESIDENT OF BANGLADESH AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN) AND THE GUB MAY HAVE VIEWED IT AS SOMEWHAT OF AN ANTICLIMAX. NEVERTHELESS, IT APPEARS TO HAVE GONE OFF WELL WITH NO BLUNDERS OR SERIOUS PROBLEMS NOTED BY EITHER SIDE. END SUMMAY.

1. INDIAN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER SHRI ATAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE COMPLETED A THREE-DAY GOODWILL VISIT TO BURMA ON AUGUST 19. DURING HIS STAY IN BURMA THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER CALL ON PRESIDENT U NE WIN, PRIME MINISTER U MAUNG MAUNG KHA, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS U HLA PHONE AND
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OTHER HIGH LEVEL GUB OFFICIALS. HE ALSO VISITED PAGAN AND MANDALAY AND FOLLOWED THE TRADITIONAL CEREMONIAL FUNCTIONS SUCH AS LAYING A WREATH AT THE MARTYRS MAUSOLEUM, AND VISITING THE SHWEDAGON PAGODA.

2. ACCORDING TO INDIAN EMBASSY SOURCES, THIS WAS AN ORIENTATION VISIT FOR THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER WHO IS

RELATIVELY NEW TO THE OFFICE. GUB MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIALS ALSO CLAIMED THE VISIT WAS "OF A PROTOCOL NATURE" WITH LITTLE SUBSTANCE DISCUSSED. IN A DEPARTURE STATEMENT THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER SAID THAT DURING HIS CORDIAL TALKS WITH PRESIDENT NE WIN, HE APPRAISED THE PRESIDENT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA AND THE DESIRE OF THE GOI TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND TO WORK IN COOPERATION WITH ALL NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES FOR A "NEW INTERNATIONAL ORDER." IN HIS TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER MAUNG MAUNG KHA, THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER SAID HE DISCUSSED NEW AVENUES OF ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL COOPERATION AND EXTENDED AN INVITATION FOR A COMPOSITE ECONOMIC, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL DELEGATION FROM BURMA TO VISIT INDIA. AN INDIAN INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC DELEGATION WOULD THEN VISIT BURMA. TALKS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER HLA PHONE CENTERED ON INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL QUESTIONS AS WELL AS BILATERAL ISSUES. THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER EXTENDED INVITATIONS TO VISIT INDIA TO PRESIDENT NE WIN, PRIME MINISTER MAUNG MAUNG KHA AND FOREIGN MINISTER HLA PHONE. THE INVITATIONS WERE ACCEPTED.

3. A RELIABLE SOURCE SAID THE TALKS INCLUDED THE PROBLEM OF REPATRIATION OF INDIAN NATIONALS, SOME 50,000 OF WHOM ARE STILL TO BE REPATRIATED. INDIA HAS AGREED TO ACCEPT THESE PEOPLE, BUT THE GUB HAS BEEN SLOW TO ISSUE DOCUMENTATION THAT WOULD ALLOW THEM TO DEPART BURMA, THUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LEAVING THEM IN A STATE OF LIMBO WHERE THEY CANNOT BE LEGALLY EMPLOYED OR OWN PROPERTY. AN INDIAN EMBASSY OFFICER SAID THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY THESE PEOPLE IN OBTAINING DAILY NECESSITIES ARE A MAJOR "HEADACHE" FOR THE EMBASSY AND THE INDIANS HOPE THE NECESSARY TRAVEL DOCUMENTS WILL SOON BE FORTHCOMING. OTHER ISSUES DISCUSSED INCLUDED TRADE, WHERE INDIA HAS AN OVERWHELMINGLY FAVORABLE BALANCE WITH BURMA WHICH THE GUB WOULD LIKE TO REDUCE, AND OFFSHORE BOUNDARIES WHICH MIGHT BECOME AN IMPORTANT ISSUE SHOULD PETROLEUM BE FOUND IN OR NEAR DISPUTED WATERS.

4. FOR THE BURMESE THE VISIT MAY HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT OF AN ANTICLIMAX AS IT FOLLOWED CLOSELY THE VISITS OF THE PRESIDENT OF BANGLADESH AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN. NEVERTHELESS, THE GUB PLAYED THE PART OF GOOD HOST AND THE VISIT SEEMS TO HAVE GONE OFF WELL.

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